

EXTRACTS.

A FABLE FOR BULLES.
A king of Persia, once upon a day,
Bade with his courtiers to the chase away.
Thirst entook him to a desert plain,
Where he sought a cooling fountain vain.
Less he chanced upon a garden fine,
Bliss in fusions orange, grape, and pine.
"God forbad my spirit I slain!"
Quoth he, "for the garden's sake."
For if to pluck one single fruit I dare,
These my vultures will lay the garden bare."

From the French.

LITERARY MEM.

It has been observed that there was a great scarcity of ghosts in the Christmas numbers issued during the season. This is the more remarkable, as it is well known that those who have the getting up of that class of literature are never particular to a shade.

A TAX ON KISSES.

According to a book on "Kisses," about 150,000,000 kisses are given daily. Russia leads, at a rate of 30,000,000; Germany next, with 26,000,000; France, 18,000,000; England, 13,000,000; and Saxony, 1,500,000, especially Dresden, which does 90,000. The writer thinks there might be a tax on kissing—penny for each.—*Truth*.

COUNTRY-DANCES.

The country-dance has always been the pet of English literature, whether as a picture, a school of manners, or the natural and yet orderly exercise for youthful spirits. They have gone out, and dances rather exciting than exhilarating have taken their place. But as the excitement does not extend to the observer as did the exhilaration, the pleasures of the round dance remain unawed. How pleasant are all the notices of the country-dance in Miss Austen, whether it is Fanny Price for once in spirits, and practising her steps before the ball, or Mrs. Elton, wondering how her style and Frank Churchill's will suit; or the young people coming up available couples, getting up an extempore dance at a moment's notice, or suggesting that fine analogy between the country-dance and marriage, with which Henry Tilney puzzles his partner, whose attention has been rudely called off from him by John Thorpe! "You will allow that in both man has the advantage of choice; that it is an engagement between man and woman, formed for the advantage of each; that it is their duty each to endeavour to give the other no cause for wishing that he or she had bestowed themselves elsewhere, and—while she still sees them as 'so very different'—his concession."

"In one respect they certainly is a difference. In marriage, the man is supposed to provide for the support of the woman, the woman to make the house agreeable to the man; he is to purvey, she is to smile. But in dancing, their duties are exactly changed; the agreeableness, the compliance, are expected from him, while she furnishes the fan and the lavender-water. That, I suppose was the difference of duties which struck you?" Miss Austen, no less than Mrs. Delany, wrote in the long reign of the country-dance, without a thought of its being superseded. George Eliot looks back upon it tenderly as a thing of the past—as the dances in which all classes can mingle, and all ages take their share. Thus, "Mr. Poyser, to whom an extra-table had restored his youthful confidence in his good looks and good dancing, walked along quite proudly to be introduced to his partner the great lady of the Hall," secretly flattering himself that Miss Lydia had never had a partner in her life who could lift her off the ground as he could. "Pity it was not a board floor!" adds the writer; "then the rhythmic stamping of the thick shoes would have been better than drums. That merry stamping, that gracious nodding of the head, that waving bestowal of the hand, where can we see them now?" Walter Scott, who could scarcely have known the pleasure of dancing from experience, is as regretful in his tone. Late in life he writes in his journal with mingled pleasure and bitterness. "Here [in the assembly rooms at Durham] I saw some very pretty girls dancing merrily that old-fashioned thing called a country-dance. Which Old England has now thrown aside as she would her crest if there were some foreign frippery offered instead." Nor was verse wanting in its appropriate dirge. A writer in the *London Magazine*, 1823, denounces the immediate success of the sub-stitute, then received into favour:

"Look where we will, joy seems extinguished,
The dance its very birth has changed,
Now formal, once how simple!
The palpitating casting of two couple,
All frozen to quivering."

—From "Schools of Mind and Manners," in Blackwood's Magazine.

DRAWING THE LINE SHARPLY.

I witnessed on one occasion, some years after the tightening-up process had gone into play, a curious illustration of the working of the system.

In King's Inn Street, Dublin, in the midst of a very poor and wretched Catholic population, some of the zealous proselytising Protestant societies established a school "under the Board," and duly received a Board grant. They kept within the Board rules as to the hours for religious instruction, yet were able to bring the rugged little Papists under scriptural class teaching all the same; for a breakfast or lunch was given along with it. In fact, when I visited the school, the soup-boilers were downstairs in the basement in full performance.

The Catholic clergy soon heard of these operations carried on under the eye of the national Board system. They remonstrated, but the Board could do nothing; its rules were not violated. It was, however, pointed out to the reverend complainers that they too could set up a Board school in the district; which indeed they did, by taking the opposite house in the street, so that within a perch or two another there were two "national schools" arrayed in denominational duel. I heard of all this, and decided to see it for myself. When I visited "No. 2," or the Catholic school, which was taught by nuns, it was the rule hour for "religious instruction." I was astonished to see a beautiful little oratory at the end of the room, wreathed with flowers, and lighted up with tapers, while the children were singing in chorus a Catholic hymn. "How on earth do the Board allow you to have this oratory?" I asked of the sister in charge. "It is forbidden to have any religious picture, symbol, or sign, and the practice of silently bowing the head in mental prayer, stroke of the clock, has been declared against the rules; yet here you have contrived all these!"

"Oh, not at all," replied the nun; "just wait a while till the rule hour for resumption of school strikes, and you shall see."

Sure enough, at stroke of the clock a transformation that rather surprised me took place. Falling doors that had not noticed were at once closed in on the oratory; a top fell over it, steps were drawn out in front, and lo! nothing appeared but a teacher's rostrum!

I hardly knew what to say, what feelings were uppermost in the first moment, but a very little reflection satisfied me that I could hardly have a good moral effect on children to see the "secular" and "religious" lines drawn so sharply as that.—*New Ireland*. By A. M. Sullivan.

OPTICAL DECEPTIONS.

Optical illusions are capable of almost unlimited extension. One which produces great wonder in an audience is where a large black bird is placed unmistakably in their view, and the bright colours of which the Indians are so fond make a wonderful effect when seen from a height. All the procession carries lighted candles, and when the military band does not play a waltz or a polka, the priests chant in a psalm. In the piazza, where the fun is to be found, the stalls are much the same as in our own fair. Cheap clothing and common gewgaws, with piles of gingerbread and fancy cakes, called after two universals, but we have not strings of cubans threaded into chaplets, as they have; nor pictures and statuettes of saints and Madonnas, whereof the art is below contempt; nor little shrines with money-boxes before them, where the money paid will be so much to your account in the heavenly bank; nor stalls of peaches and figs to be had for almost nothing; nor do our local ladies go about in vials only, and never a bonnet for their comely heads; nor have our peasant women piles of elaborately dressed hair; nor real, parlous, the multitudinous plates of which are run through a silver bodkin of exactly the same size and pattern as the actor's head being merely thrust through a hole in a silvered glass plate, which, by a skilful arrangement of lights and drapery, was invisible to the audience. The trick called "Palengesca" was upon the same principle, and the limbs to be severed from the body were dummies fixed in holes in the glass, while the real limbs of the performer reposed in perfect security behind it. The illusion of the "secret little cherubs" who sat (or, rather floated, sitting being an impossible position under the circumstances) upon the Polytechnic, after the celebrated picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, were produced by the same means; but might also have been arranged as successfully by reflection from some interesting children engaged for the occasion, whose bodies, being considered superfluous for the characters they were to represent, could be hidden behind a dark cloth, through which their heads peered. This matching in colour the background of the stage, and skilful blending with it in the reflection, would assist the illusion.—*Mr. Marklyn, in the Leisure Hour*.

AN EGYPTIAN COFFEE-HOUSE.

The house itself is not exactly dirty, but the landlord always is so, since he sits in the middle of the room like the stoker of an engine. A large pot with hot water is always on the fire; a panikin, either with a cover or with a fragmentary one, serves to make ready any single order. The beverage prepared is excellent in spite of the fact that much of the aroma has escaped through the holes in the lid. Moloka is near, and chirico almost unknown. Roasted chick-peas are the common substitute with the thrifty, and they do not taste badly, especially when a few cloves are added as is often done, to improve the flavour. The crushing of the roasted coffee-beans with a heavy pestle, which reduces them to a fine flour, such as coffee-mills never produce, no doubt contributes essentially to the satisfactory extraction of all the elements in the coffee. Coffee-grinding, or rather pounding, forms a distinct trade. At every blow of the long and heavy pestle, piled with beans, the workman emits a loud groan, from his chest. The frequenters of the coffee-house, as already stated, are of the poorer sort, such as artisans, petty shopkeepers, attendants in public offices, Turkish soldiers, seldom a peasant. The civilian prefers the floor, and despises the chairs standing beside him, leaving it to the more honourable customers—the Turkish soldiers to sit. One man finds it exceedingly comfortable to assume a croaking position intermediate between sitting and standing, with his knees much bent, so that his hands come within a few inches of the floor, but do not touch it; another in a similar position supports himself on the floor with his legs bent, and his arms clasped round them; a third sits with his legs crossed in the well-known position in which tailors sit. This, as well as the squatting position on the floor, was common among the ancient Egyptians, and is a genuine Oriental custom. They, however, were fonder of sitting upon chairs and tasteful fauteuils, and were likewise accustomed to sit resting upon one knee, a practice which is never observed now, possibly for religious reasons, since it is held that one ought to kneel and prostrate himself before the altar to be healed? And we have made some steps toward the true solution. We say, it is not enough to tell people to be religious, you must occupy their minds and give them a task for something better than drinking. And we get up Penny Readings and Popular Lectures and Working Men's Colleges. Dimly at the same time we see that the deficiencies of the better classes are radically of the same kind, and require the same remedy. What takes the working man to the public-house is the same defect which ties the city man to his desk and makes his life monotonous and unlovely. It is the ignorance of anything better—the want of occupation for his higher life. And something begins to be done for him too. We have begun to purify the idea of culture, and to understand that we must present it for the future as something precious and beautiful in itself, and no longer merely as a means of success and money-making. These are the new conditions which practical reformers have lately acquired. They have led to a practical rebellion against the clerical revival of the last age, for they amount to a conviction that no such revival can be by itself regenerate the country. And the clergy are acknowledging this by enlarging their field, by taking into their province much which hitherto they regarded as secular. They do to under-the-skin that which is in itself secular, such as music, architecture, popular science, may be the popular colour wafted from the East. The popular colour wafted from the East betrays this unmistakably. The keeping of hashish, to be sure, has been again forbidden lately; generally, however, such ordinances are strictly enforced only for short time after they are promulgated. Already a few may, perhaps, have smothered themselves into a state of the most rapturous happiness, yet their "intoxication" is of a mild and robust nature, often humorously leavened with pain, and is mainly characterised by mental delusions. On the whole, there reigns in these resorts of the common people a stillness and gravity peculiar to the Oriental.—*Upper Egypt: Its People and Products*. By C. B. Kinnaird, M.D.

A FETE DAY IN NAPLES.

May the month of the Madonna is the month of feste. Every night we used to see rockets and Roman candles light up the town and villages along the coast, and Naples was never without a festa, in one or other of its parades to remind the saints of their duty, and to coax them to give us a taste of mortals, for the honours done to their shrine. Our festa is very掌上明珠, and when you have seen one you have seen all.

The church is draped in richly theatrical finery, which conceals every line and circumstance of value, and every good architectural detail, and thermant, from curtain to tabernacle, is for the most part extensible. After high mass the image of the patron saint is paraded through the city, to be saluted with crackers and炮仗, showers of confetti or blossoms of the present as it passes. The hooded by the hand follows by the village fathers in their most decent clothes—short boys in white and blue—detachments of lay-bands and choirs, in various colours, and carrying crucifixes, banners, and the like—the procession culminating in the chief priest.

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